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Population and development information, education and communication

(Chapter XI of the draft programme of
action of the Conference)

Text submitted by the Vice-Chairman (Mr. Lionel Hurst
(Antigua and Barbuda)) (Working Group I) on the basis
of negotiations held on document A/CONF.171/PC/5

Chapter XI

POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION

Basis for action

11.1. Greater public knowledge, understanding and commitment at all levels, from the individual to the international, are vital to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the present programme of action. In all countries and among all groups, therefore, information, education and communication activities concerning population and sustainable development issues must be strengthened. This includes the establishment of gender- and culturally sensitive information, education and communication plans and strategies related to population and development. At the national level, more adequate and appropriate information enables planners and policy makers to make more appropriate plans and decisions in relation to population and sustainable development. At the most basic level, more adequate and appropriate information enables [families], [couples and individuals] ALTERNATIVE WORDING [women and men have the same rights] to make informed, responsible decisions affecting their own health, [sexual and reproductive behaviour], family life, and patterns of production and consumption. In addition, more and better information about the causes and benefits of migration can create a more positive environment for societies to address and respond to migration challenges.

11.2. Effective information, education and communication are prerequisites for sustainable human development and pave the way for attitudinal and behavioural change. Indeed, this begins with the recognition that [families], [couples and individuals] ALTERNATIVE WORDING [women and men have the same rights] have the right and duty to make informed, free and responsible decisions on the number and spacing of their children and in all other aspects of daily life, [including sexual and reproductive behaviour]. Greater public knowledge and commitment in a democratic setting create a climate conducive to responsible and informed decisions and behaviour. Most importantly, they also pave the way for democratic public discussion and thereby make possible strong political commitment and popular support for needed action at the local, national and international levels.

11.3. Effective information, education and communication activities include a range of communication channels, from the most intimate levels of interpersonal communication to formal school curricula, from traditional folk arts to modern mass entertainment, and from seminars for local community leaders to coverage of global issues by the national and international news media. Multichannel approaches are usually more effective than any single communication channel. All these channels of communication have an important role to play in promoting an understanding of the interrelationships between population and sustainable development. Schools and religious institutions, taking into account their values and teachings, may be important vehicles in all countries for instilling gender and racial sensitivity, respect, tolerance and equity, family responsibility and other important attitudes at all ages. Effective networks also exist in many countries for non-formal education on population and

sustainable development issues through the workplace, health facilities, trade unions, community centres, youth groups, religious institutions, women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations. Such issues may also be included in more structured adult education, vocational training and literacy programmes, particularly for women. These networks are critical to reaching the entire population, especially men, adolescents and young couples. Parliamentarians, teachers, religious and other community leaders, traditional healers, health professionals, parents and older relatives are influential in forming public opinion and should be consulted during the preparation of information, education and communication activities. The media also offer many potentially powerful role models.

11.4. Current information, education and communication technologies such as global interlinked telephone, television and data transmission networks, compact discs and new multimedia technologies can help bridge the geographical, social and economic gaps that currently exist in access to information around the world. They can help ensure that the vast majority of the world's people are involved in debates at the local, national and global levels about demographic changes and sustainable human development, economic and social inequities, the importance of empowering women [sexual and reproductive health and family planning], health promotion, ageing populations, rapid urbanization and migration. Greater public involvement of national authorities and the community ensure the widespread diffusion of such technologies and the freer flow of information within and between countries. It is essential that parliaments have full access to the information necessary for decision-making.

Objectives

11.5. The objectives are:

(a) To increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and commitment at all levels of society so that families, couples, individuals, opinion and community leaders, non-governmental organizations, policy makers, Governments and the international community appreciate the significance and relevance of population-related issues and will take the responsible actions necessary to address such issues within the context of sustained economic growth and sustainable development;

(b) To encourage attitudes in favour of responsible behaviour in population and development, especially in areas such as environment, family, sexuality, [reproduction] gender and racial sensitivity;

(c) To ensure political commitment to population and development issues by national Governments in order to promote participation at all levels from both the public and private sectors in the design, implementation and monitoring of population and development policies and programmes;

(d) To enhance the ability of [families, couples and individuals] to make and implement free, informed and responsible [reproductive choices].

ALTERNATIVE (d) [Women and men have the same right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children.]

Actions

11.6. Information, education and communication efforts should raise awareness through public education campaigns on priority issues such as: [safe motherhood], [sexual and reproductive health and rights], maternal and child health [and family planning], discrimination against and valorization of the girl child and persons with disabilities; child abuse; violence against women; male responsibility; gender equality; sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS; responsible sexual behaviour; teenage pregnancy; racism and xenophobia; ageing populations; and unsustainable consumption and production patterns.

11.7. Elected representatives at all levels, the scientific community, religious, political and traditional leaders, non-governmental organizations, parents' associations, social workers, women's groups, the private sector, communication specialists of recognized morality and others in influential positions should have access to information on population and sustainable development and related issues. They should promote understanding of the issues addressed in this programme of action and mobilize public opinion in support of the actions proposed.

11.8. Members of Parliament are invited to continue to promote wide awareness on issues related to population and sustainable development and to ensure the enactment of legislation necessary for effective implementation of the programme of action.

11.9. A coordinated strategic approach to information, education and communication should be adopted in order to maximize the impact of various information, education and communication activities, both modern and traditional, which may be undertaken on several fronts by various actors, and with diverse audiences. It is especially important that information, education and communication strategies be linked to, and complement, national population and development policies and strategies and a full range of services in [sexual and reproductive health and family planning] in order to enhance the use of those services and improve the quality of counselling and care.

11.10. Information, education and communication activities should rely on up-to-date research findings to determine information needs and the most effective culturally acceptable ways of reaching intended audiences. To that end, professionals experienced in the traditional and non-traditional media should be enlisted. The participation of the intended audiences in the design, implementation and monitoring of information, education and communication activities should be ensured so as to enhance the relevance and impact of those activities.

11.11. The interpersonal communication skills - in particular, motivational and counselling skills - of public, private and non-governmental organization service providers, community leaders, teachers, peer groups and others should be strengthened, whenever possible, to enhance interaction and quality assurance in the delivery of [family planning and sexual and reproductive health] services. Such communication should take into account [ethical values] and be free from coercion.

11.12. The tremendous potential of print, audiovisual and electronic media, including databases and networks such as the United Nations Population Information Network (POPIN), should be harnessed to disseminate technical information and to promote and strengthen understanding of the relationships between population, consumption, production and sustainable development.

11.13. Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector should make greater use of the entertainment media, including radio and television soap operas and drama, folk theater and other traditional media to encourage public discussion of important but sometimes sensitive topics related to the implementation of this programme of action. When the entertainment media - especially dramas - are used for advocacy purposes or to promote particular lifestyles, the public should be so informed, and in each case the identity of sponsors should be indicated in an appropriate manner.

11.14. Age-appropriate education, especially for adolescents, about the issues considered in this programme of action should begin in the home and community and continue through all levels and channels of formal and non-formal education, taking into account the rights and responsibilities of parents and the needs of adolescents. Where such education already exists, curricula and educational materials should be reviewed, updated and broadened with a view to ensuring adequate coverage of important population-related issues and to counteract myths and misconceptions on them. Where no such education exists, appropriate curricula and materials should be developed. To ensure acceptance, effectiveness and usefulness by the community, education projects should be based on the findings of socio-cultural studies and should involve the active participation of parents and families, women, youth, elders and community leaders.

11.15. (combination of 11.14 and 11.16.) Governments should give priority to the training and retention of information, education and communication specialists, especially teachers, and of all others involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of information, education and communication programmes. It is necessary to train specialists who can contribute to the important conceptual and methodological development of education concerning population and related issues. Therefore, systems for professional training should be created and strengthened with specializations that prepare them to work effectively with Governments and with non-governmental organizations active in this field. In addition, there should be greater collaboration between the academic community and other entities in order to strengthen conceptual and methodological work and research in this field.

11.17. To enhance solidarity and to sustain development assistance, all countries need to be continuously informed about population and development issues. Countries should establish population information centres, where appropriate, to facilitate the systematic collection, analysis and dissemination, and utilization of population-related information at the national and international levels, and networks should be established or strengthened at the national, subregional, regional and global levels to promote information and experience exchange.